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DE RUEHBO #0898/01 3342231
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 302231Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1135
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 8477
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA 4525
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5183
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3786
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1410

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010898

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2016
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: PDAS FARRAR VISITS SAN JOSE DE APARTADO AND 17TH
BRIGADE

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (U) On November 13, DRL PDAS Jonathan Farrar traveled with General Freddy Padilla, Commander of the Colombian Armed Forces, to Apartado, Antioquia Department to meet with local officials, police and military leaders. PDAS Farrar and his delegation also met separately with members of the San Jose de Apartado "peace community" of La Holandita. Members of the peace community rejected GOC assistance, claimed continued threats from security forces and paramilitaries, and reiterated their refusal to cooperate with the official investigation into the February 21, 2005 massacre of peace community members in La Resbalosa. GOC and local officials outlined infrastructure, health, and social services programs in the area, especially for displaced communities. 17th Brigade Commander General Zapata explained the current security situation, his soldiers, human rights training, and community outreach. Spokespersons for the peace community alleged abiding threats from the military and paramilitaries, while a neighboring community in San Jose de Apartado praised the social services provided by the GOC. None of the delegation's interlocutors had ideas or initiatives to reduce the distrust between the peace community and its neighbors, GOC officials, and the security forces. End Summary.

GOC Strategy To Expand Services In San Jose de Apartado

2. (C) Jaime Avendano, an official from GOC local government assistance program Accion Integral, listed GOC objectives in Apartado as establishing GOC control of territory, reintegrating demobilized paramilitaries, ensuring justice for victims of paramilitary violence, and reconstructing the region's social fabric through recreational and cultural activities. The Apartado Mayor's Office highlighted health, education, and rural development programs, some funded by USAID. General Padilla stressed that GOC programs to extend civilian services to rural areas were crucial to achieving long-term security. Given the peace community's refusal to engage with the GOC, General Padilla said the GOC's strategy is to step up social service and infrastructure improvements in the surrounding area to encourage community members to reintegrate with their neighbors.

17th Brigade Explains Human Rights Progress, Outreach

13. (C) General Zapata, commander of the 17th Brigade, said all illegal armed groups operated in the greater Uraba region, but the 17th Brigade was making progress in containing them. The 17th Brigade had strengthened its culture of respect for human rights through prevention (training and education), deterrence (severe punishment for violators), control (effective investigations into human rights abuses), and integration (strengthening inter-institutional coordination). Zapata said 5,795 brigade members received human rights training in 2006.

14. (C) He also highlighted examples of the brigade's outreach to San Jose de Apartado, including providing medical attention as well as sports and recreation programs. The brigade also had set up a public library and park. Zapata said the military had offered services to the peace community of La Holandita, but the community has rejected all offers. He added that the military and international human rights groups were in direct contact on peace community issues through the Ministry of Defense in Bogota. The visit also found little progress in resolving allegations of past abuses by members of the 17th Brigade; most investigations of such abuses are being handled by the Human Rights Unit of the National Prosecutor's Office in Medellin.

Police Efforts

15. (C) The head of the Colombian National Police (CNP) in Uraba told Farrar the police met on a weekly basis with representatives of international human rights groups residing in the peace community to ensure their safety and listen to

their concerns. He said relations with the San Jose de Apartado community were excellent, but noted that the La Holandita peace community, about 600 people out of SJdA's 7,000 inhabitants, did not accept police protection.

La Holandita Peace Community Opens Gate For PDAS Farrar

16. (C) The peace community meeting was tightly structured, with designated spokespersons making prepared statements and other community members reticent to speak. The spokespersons alleged ongoing threats from the army and paramilitaries and explained their decision to refuse most contact with the national and local government. They itemized a long list of alleged abuses against the community by the army, police, and paramilitaries, dating back 10 years. The spokespersons said they refused to cooperate with the Office of the Prosecutor General's investigations into such violations because "the army kills the witnesses." They recognized GOC offers to provide the community with social services, but said they would not accept them until the GOC recognized four conditions: 1) President Uribe making a public statement in support of peace communities; 2) the military completely withdrawing from all areas of San Jose de Apartado; 3) the GOC's reconvening of a Commission of Investigation; and 4) the GOC guaranteeing that all humanitarian zones be respected. From side conversations with members of the community, it became clear that they quietly avail themselves of GOC services such as urgent medical care and secondary school education.

Other SJdA Citizens: Peace Community Does Not Speak For Us

17. (C) The contrast between the peace community and San Jose de Apartado meetings was striking. San Jose de Apartado participants were outspoken, even in the presence of GOC security forces. They expressed general consensus that the area was much safer since the police and military had reestablished presence there. They said the overall community of San Jose de Apartado was now "a mix of different

cultures" due to the recent return of displaced groups. They pointed out that greater community of San Jose de Apartado did not share the "radical" position of the peace community of La Holandita.

¶8. (C) Community leaders highlighted the need for more schools, better roads, and resolution of land right issues (including title to the school property that was the site of the meeting), but noted GOC efforts to improve basic education and healthcare. They praised the GOC's construction of a road linking San Jose de Apartado to the county seat of Apartado municipality (which passes in front of the peace community), noting that this had improved their economic prospects as well as their overall quality of life. They recognized the military's efforts to improve relations with the civilian population, but said abuses by individual soldiers continue. At the end of the meeting, the human rights ombudsman and local prosecutor, clearly agitated, pulled aside PDAS Farrar to relate that abuses continue, especially with troops deployed in rural areas or with new recruits.

¶9. (U) PDAS Farrar cleared this cable.
WOOD